

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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R 080250Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 848
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY

UNCLAS SINGAPORE 3524

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, PP, SN
SUBJECT: VISIT OF PNG PRIME MINISTER TO SINGAPORE

1. SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER MICHAEL SOMARE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA, ACCOMPANIED BY MRS. SOMARE AND A PARTY OF NINE OFFICIALS, PAID AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO SINGAPORE JULY 23 TO 29. IN ADDITION TO CEREMONIAL AND SOCIAL CALLS AND ENGAGEMENTS, PRIME MINISTER SOMARE VISITED A NUMBER OF FACTORIES IN THE JURONG INDUSTRIAL ESTATE. HE HELD DISCUSSIONS WITH SINGAPORE OFFICIALS ON TRADE AND AIR AND SHIPPING LINKS BETWEEN SINGAPORE AND PAPUA NEW GUINEA. IN PRESS INTERVIEWS SOMARE SPOKE OF PNG AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC, AND COMMENTED THAT HIS OBSERVATIONS OF SINGAPORE'S EXPERIENCE WOULD BE USEFUL IN PLANNING PNG'S OWN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT. IN ONE PRESS REPORT SOMARE IS DESCRIBED AS HAVING SAID THAT HIS GOVERNMENT DID NOT ACCEPT THAT INDONESIAN FORCES HAD ANY RIGHT TO DELIBERATELY CROSS THE BORDER IN UNCLASSIFIED

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PUGSUIT OF REBELS FROM IRIAN JAYA. END SUMMARY.

2. PAPUA NEW GUINEA PRIME MINISTER AND MRS. SOMARE, ACCOMPANIED BY NINE OFFICIALS, WERE WELCOMED ON THEIR ARRIVAL IN SINGAPORE ON JULY 23 BY PRIME MINISTER AND MRS. LEE, SENIOR MINISTERS, AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS INCLUDING PNG'S HIGH

COMMISSIONER, RESIDENT IN JAKARTA, DOMINIC PAKUMA
DIYA. DURING HIS WEEK-LONG OFFICIAL VISIT TO
SINGAPORE, PRIME MINISTER SOMARE WAS ACCOMPANIED
BY ACTING MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS DR. AHMAD
MATTAR. MRS. SOMARE FOLLOWED A LARGELY SEPARATE
SCHEDULE WITH EMPHASIS ON GARDENS AND OTHER TOURIST
ATTRACTIONS. PRIME MINISTER AND MRS. SOMARE CALLED
ON PRESIDENT AND MRS. SHEARES, AND WERE DINNER
GUESTS OF PRIME MINISTER AND MRS. LEE, FINANCE
MINISTER AND MRS. HON SUI SEN, THE SINGAPORE TOURIST
PROMOTION BOARD, AND THE SINGAPORE FEDERATION OF
CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY.

3. THE SUBSTANTIVE PORTION OF THE VISIT APPARENTLY
WAS CONCERNED WITH INCREASING TRADE BETWEEN PNG AND
SINGAPORE. CHAIRMAN OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
BOARD NGIAM TONG DOW AND TRADE DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR
RIDZWAN DZAFIR SAT IN ON PRIME MINISTER LEE'S TALKS
WITH PM SOMARE. RIDZWAN MET AGAIN WITH SOMARE DURING
VISIT TO JURONG INDUSTRIAL ESTATE. IN HIS PRE-
DEPARTURE PRESS CONFERENCE ON JULY 29, SOMARE IS
QUOTED AS SAYING THAT DISCUSSION OF BILATERAL TRADE
RELATIONS AND WIDENING SCOPE OF SINGAPORE-PNG TRADE
HAD BEEN MAIN PURPOSE OF VISIT. PRELIMINARY DIS-
CUSSIONS ON ESTABLISHING A DIRECT AIR LINK
BETWEEN PNG AND SINGAPORE WERE ALSO DISCUSSED BY
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OFFICIALS OF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, ACCORDING TO PRESS
REPORTS. SOMARE IS FURTHER REPORTED AS SAYING THAT
HIS OBSERVATIONS OF SINGAPORE'S DEVELOPMENT EX-
PERIENCE DURING HIS VISIT WOULD BE USEFUL IN
PLANNING PNG'S OWN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT. DURING A
TELEVISION INTERVIEW, PM SOMARE SUGGESTED THAT
SINGAPORE COULD PROVIDE TECHNICAL EXPERTISE FOR PNG,
WHILE PNG MIGHT SERVE AS A SOURCE OF RAW MATERIALS
FOR SINGAPORE. HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT TRADITIONAL
LINKS WITH AUSTRALIA, THE PRINCIPAL BUYER OF PNG
COMMODITIES, WOULD BE MAINTAINED.

4. ASEAN WAS MENTIONED BOTH IN THE TELEVISION
INTERVIEW AND THE FINAL PRESS CONFERENCE. ON
TELEVISION, SOMARE SPOKE OF PNG AS A "BRIDGE"
BETWEEN THE SOUTH PACIFIC AND SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND
SAID THAT PNG IS TRYING TO START A DIALOGUE BETWEEN
ASEAN AND THE ECONOMIC BUREAU OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC
FORUM TO DEVELOP CLOSER ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN
THE TWO REGIONAL GROUPS. IN RESPONSE TO PRESS
CONFERENCE QUESTIONS, MR. SOMARE SAID THAT PNG HAD
NO PLANS TO JOIN ASEA, BUT HAD ESTABLISHED A

DIALOGUE WITH ASEAN FOR TRADE PURPOSES.

5. IN A STORY APPARENTLY BASED ON SOMARE'S PRE-DEPARTURE PRESS CONFERENCE, JULY 30 SUNDAY NATION QUOTED SOMARE AS SAYING THAT HIS GOVERNMENT DID NOT ACCEPT RIGHT OF REBELS FROM IRIAN JAYA. ACCORDING THIS STORY, SOMARE ADDED THAT EARLIER INCURSION HAD BEEN ACCIDENTAL BUT THAT ANY DELIBERATE CROSSING OF BORDER WOULD BE MET BY DIPLOMATIC PROTEST.

6. COMMENT: VISIT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY RELAXED AND FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE. PRESS COVERAGE (ALL FOUR LANGUAGES) WAS SUBSTANTIAL, BUT THERE WAS NO SUBSTANTIVE EDITORIAL COMMENT ON VISIT. TELEVISION UNCLASSIFIED

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INTERVIEW OF VISITING OFFICIALS SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL, AND MAY HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO EDUCATE SINGAPORE PUBLIC ON A LITTLE-KNOWN RECENTLY INDEPENDENT NEIGHBOR. PRESENT LEVELS OF SINGAPORE-PNG TRADE ARE MODEST; ACCORDING PRESS REPORTS PNG IMPORTS REFINED OIL, MACHINERY AND TEXTILES FROM SINGAPORE, AND TOTAL TRADE JANUARY-APRIL 1978 APPROXIMATELY US\$25 MILLION. EXPANSION OF TRADE SHOULD NOT PROVE DIFFICULT; TIMBER, AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE, AND MINERALS FROM PNG FOR PROCESSING IN SINGAPORE HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED AS ITEMS OF INTEREST.
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